

Executive Summary

The widely criticised 'Operation Restore Order', also known in the vernacular Shona language as 'Operation *Murambatsvina*' no doubt was the talking point for the greater part of the month of June, with local and international stakeholders voicing their concerns over the breaches of human rights and the perceived politicisation of the issue.

The timing of the exercise, in which the government was at great pains to defend as a necessary 'clean up' of urban and semi-urban areas of vice and dirt through demolitions of the so-called 'illegal' structures left a lot to be desired.

Reports reaching the ZPP indicate that the exercise, which was essentially supposed to be carried out by town and city councils nationwide, was perceived as having been literally hijacked by the national authorities as a form of retribution against the majority of urban dwellers who voted overwhelmingly for the country's major opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

The incidents outlined briefly below serve to buttress the above assertion. The government descended on Porta farm near **Harare** despite two high court orders barring the state from interfering in the affairs of the farm.

The ZPP witnessed on June 29, a gross disregard for human dignity by the authorities on the second day of demolitions of structures at the farm. Three suspected youths from the national youth training service allegedly assaulted AC, a twelve year old boy who was trying to retrieve stray chickens in the commotion. Five people including a pregnant woman, CK a five year old boy and RM a terminally ill woman died during the demolitions.

Reports from the Midlands have it that the clean up campaign sucked in the MDC in political violence. For example in **Gweru Urban**, it was alleged on 20 June that SC, a Zanu PF councillor coming from one of his party's meetings was intercepted and assaulted by unidentified youths believed to be MDC supporters who accused the victim of organising the demolition of houses.

On 12 June in **Masvingo Central**, it was reported that 'squatters' who had been forced to leave the Mucheke riverbanks as a result of the clean-up exercise returned to the area after failing to secure alternative accommodation only to be assaulted by police details who went on to burning their property.

Again in **Masvingo Central** it was reported that on 29 June, in an unnerving incident at Gomba Business Centre, SN an MDC activist allegedly stabbed CZ, a Zanu PF supporter with a knife after a heated argument concerning perceptions of the *Murambatsvina* campaign. The alleged perpetrator, according to reports, is still on the run from the police who are said to be diligently investigating the matter.

In **Nyanga** on 20 June, kraal head JH of Hondo village under Chief Saunyama reportedly denied AM, an MDC activist and his family entry into the village after his dwelling in Mutare was destroyed during the Operation *Murambatsvina*. It is said the victim's relatives who sought to take him in were threatened with unspecified action if they did. It is said the victim and his family spent two days in the open before returning to Mutare.

In **Zengeza**, on 8 June, a group of suspected MDC supporters allegedly attacked police officers who were ordering people to demolish their illegal structures. The lawmen, it is

said, managed to escape during which time the attackers were accusing them of assaulting an innocent man.

An allegation of the politicisation of residential and commercial stands allocations surfaced in **Chinhoyi** at the end of June in which Zanu PF and council officials led by one Chipunza, a security officer were reportedly allocating the stands only to people with a confirmed allegiance to the ruling party. According to reports, perceived and known MDC supporters were left in the buff after it was reported that prospective 'flea market' operators could only 'qualify' to pay a 'permission fee' of \$2,7 million per head after satisfying the local ruling party officials that they were conversant about structures and operations of Zanu PF.

In the same connection, the Zanu PF District Coordinating Committee chairperson only identified as Makumbe, ward 1, 5, and 7 councillors a Magureyi, Foster Mahwani, and Prosper Mavhunga respectively, a Mrs. Chadehumba and Kamupiro, a local Zanu PF district official who also doubles up as an employee of the Chinhoyi municipal police have been allegedly carrying out 'vetting' exercises in which non-Zanu PF supporters have were being 'blacklisted for evictions under the guise of the 'clean up' campaign.

The spate of political violence sparked by the contentious clean up campaign left many scars and a trail of human rights violations by such groups like state arms, the main opposition party, ruling party and peripheral players like youth militias and war veterans.

The ZPP strongly condemns the haphazard manner in which the operation was carried out. We also revile the gross violation of human rights that the process came with and strongly urge the relevant authorities to seriously plan mitigation strategies in wide consultations with all stakeholders to avert a further deterioration of the humanitarian crisis the country is currently enmeshed in.